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[For Blackfoot terms designating phenomena concerning the external world and the human organism, and for Blackfoot terms designating tribes, bands, and other sociopolitical units, see Category 192.]

5: Grinnell Q,T-5 (ca.1888) 1962
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

mine. I made the earth, the mountains, prairies, rivers, and forests. I made the people and all the animals. This is why I say I alone am the chief. I can never die. True, the winter makes me old and weak, but every summer I grow young again."

Then said the Sun: "What one of all animals is smartest? The raven is, for he always finds food. He is never hungry. Which one of all the animals is most *Nat-o'-ye*[1]? The buffalo is. Of all animals, I like him best. He is for the people. He is your food and your shelter. What part of his body is sacred? The tongue is. That is mine. What else is sacred? Berries are. They are mine too. Come with me and see the world." He took Scarface to the edge of the sky, and they looked down and saw it. It is round and flat, and all around the edge is the jumping-off place [or walls straight down]. Then said the Sun: "When any man is sick or in danger, his wife may promise to build me a lodge, if he recovers. If the woman is pure and true, then I will be pleased and help the man. But if she is bad, if she lies, then I will be angry. You shall build the lodge like the world, round, with walls, but first you must build a sweat house of a hundred sticks. It shall be like the sky [a hemisphere], and half of it shall be painted red. That is me. The other half you will paint black. That is the night."

Further said the Sun: "Which is the best, the heart or the brain? The brain is. The heart often lies, the brain never." Then he told Scarface everything about making the Medicine Lodge, and when he had finished, he rubbed a powerful medicine on his face, and the scar disappeared. Then he gave him two raven feathers, saying: "These are the sign for the girl, that I give her to you. They must always be worn by the husband of the woman who builds a Medicine Lodge."

[1] This word may be translated as "of the Sun," "having Sun power," or more properly, something sacred.

5: Grinnell Q,T-5 (ca.1888) 1962
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

539 The song seemed to come from a cotton-wood tree near the path. Looking closely at this tree she saw a queer rock jammed in a fork, where the tree was split, and with it a few hairs from a buffalo, which had rubbed there. The woman was frightened and dared not pass the tree. Pretty soon the singing stopped, and the I-nis'-kim [buffalo rock] spoke to the woman and said: "Take me to your lodge, and when it is dark, call in the people and teach them the song you have just heard. Pray, too, that you may not starve, and that the buffalo may come back. Do this, and when day comes, your hearts will be glad."

The woman went on and got some water, and when she came back, took the rock and gave it to her husband, telling him about the song and what the rock had said. As soon as it was dark, the man called the chiefs and old men to his lodge, and his wife taught them this song. They prayed, too, as the rock had said should be done. Before long, they heard a noise far off. It was the tramp of a great herd of buffalo coming. Then they knew that the rock was very powerful, and, ever since that, the people have taken care of it and prayed to it.

778 ● 823 [NOTE.— I-nis'-kims are usually small *Ammonites*, or sections of *Baculites*, or sometimes merely oddly shaped nodules of flint. It is said of them that if an I-nis'-kim is wrapped up and left undisturbed for a long time, it will have young ones; two small stones similar in shape to the original one will be found in the package with it.]

825 778 The bear has very powerful medicine. Sometimes he takes pity on people and helps them, as in the story of Mik'-api.

821 789 [533] Some Piegans, if they wish to travel on a certain day, have the power of insuring good weather on that day. It is supposed that they do this by singing a powerful song. Some of the enemy can cause bad weather, when they want to steal into the camp.

People who belonged to the *Sin'-o-pah* band of the *I-kun-uh'-kah-tsi*, if they were at war in summer and wanted a storm to come up, would take some dirt and water and rub it on the kit-fox skin, and this would cause a rain-storm to come up. In winter, snow and dirt would be rubbed on the skin and this would bring up a snow-storm.

778 782 Certain places and inanimate objects are also greatly reverenced by the Blackfeet, and presents are made to them.

823 [115] [776] The smallest of the three buttes of the Sweet Grass Hills is regarded as sacred. "All the Indians are afraid to go there," Four Bears once told me. Presents are sometimes thrown into the Missouri River, though these are not offerings made directly to the stream, but are given to the Under Water People, who live in it.

Mention has already been made of the buffalo rock, which gives its owner the power to call the buffalo.

Another sacred object is the medicine rock of the Marias. It is a huge boulder of reddish sandstone, two-thirds the way up a steep hill on the north bank of the Marias River, about five miles from Fort Conrad. Formerly, this rock rested on the top of the bluff, but, as the soil about it is worn away by the wind and the rain, it is slowly moving down the hill. The Indians believe it to be alive, and make presents to it. When I first visited it, the ground about it was strewn with decaying remnants of offerings that had been made to it in the past. Among these I noticed, besides fragments of clothing, eagle feathers, a steel finger

A, 4 [See Category 116, pp. 61-69--Analyst]

5: Grinnell Q,T-5 (ca.1888) 1962
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

ring, brass ear-rings, and a little bottle made of two copper cartridge cases. 778 782

Down on Milk River, east of the Sweet Grass Hills, is another medicine rock. It is shaped something like a man's body, and looks like a person sitting on top of the bluff. Whenever the Blackfeet pass this rock, they make presents to it. Sometimes, when they give it an article of clothing, they put it on the rock, "and then," as one of them once said to me, "when you look at it, it seems more than ever like a person." Down in the big bend of the Milk River, opposite the eastern end of the Little Rocky Mountains, lying on the prairie, is a great gray boulder, which is shaped like a buffalo bull lying down. This is greatly reverenced by all Plains Indians, Blackfeet included, and they make presents to it. Many other examples of similar character might be given. 823 [171]

The Blackfeet make daily prayers to the Sun and to Old Man, and nothing of importance is undertaken without asking for divine assistance. They are firm believers in dreams. These, they say, are sent by the Sun to enable us to look ahead, to tell what is going to happen. A dream, especially if it is a strong one, — that is, if the dream is very clear and vivid, — is almost always obeyed. As dreams start them on the war path, so, if a dream threatening bad luck comes to a member of a war party, even if in the enemy's country and just about to make an attack on a camp, the party is likely to turn about and go home without making any hostile demonstrations. The animal or object which appears to the boy, or man, who is trying to dream for power, is, as has been said, regarded thereafter as his secret helper, his medicine, and is usually called his dream (*Nits-o'-kan*). 776 782 787 [121] [176]

The most important religious occasion of the year is the ceremony of the Medicine Lodge. This is a sacrifice, which, among the Blackfeet, is offered invariably by women. If a 796 [382] [782]

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

Old Man said, "Let the people have eyes and mouths in their faces, and let them be straight up and down." But Old Woman added, "Yes, let them have eyes and mouths; but they shall be set crosswise in their faces."

Old Man said, "Let the people have ten fingers on each hand." "No," declared Old Woman, "ten fingers are too many. They will be in the way. Let them have four fingers and a thumb on each hand." So the people were made.

But Old Man and Old Woman could not agree on one important point. Should the people live forever, or should they die? Finally Old Man said, "I will throw a buffalo chip into the water. If it floats, the people will die for four days and live again; but, if it sinks, they will die forever." He threw the buffalo chip into the water, and it floated. "No," said Old Woman, "I will throw this rock. If it floats, the people will die for four days. If it sinks, they will die forever." She threw the rock into the water, and it sank to the bottom. Then they agreed that it was better that way. If people lived forever they would never feel sorry for one another.

At first the people were hungry and cold. Then Old Man showed them how to collect edible roots and berries, how to make wooden bows and stone-headed arrows, how to use weapons, traps, and deadfalls to kill buffalo and the smaller animals for food, and how to dress animal skins for warm clothing.

His work of creation completed, Old Man climbed a high mountain and disappeared.[1]

Some say that Napi's home was in the mountains at the head of the stream that still bears his name, Oldman River, in the province of Alberta. Blackfoot Indians can still point out Old Man's gambling place west of Fort Macleod, where Napi played the hoop-and-pole game long, long ago. However, the fact that Old Man, the creator, also appears in the mythology of the Arapaho, Gros Ventre, and Cree tribes suggests that he may have been

[1] Alexander Henry and David Thompson, *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest*, II, 528. Many versions of this story have been recorded since Henry first mentioned the Old Man legend in his journal in 1810.

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

bill on the ground that a land cession should be negotiated with the Indians in the field.[10]

On May 15, 1886, Congress authorized the appointment of the Northwest Commission to negotiate with the Sioux, Assiniboin, Gros Ventre, and Blackfoot Indians of Montana for the cession of "so much of their land as they do not require, in order to obtain the means to enable them to become self-supporting, as a pastoral and agricultural people, and to educate their children in the paths of civilization."[11]

After completing negotiations with the tribes farther east, the commissioners proceeded, under abominable weather conditions, toward the Blackfoot Agency. Traveling through snow as much as two feet deep, in temperatures as low as fifty degrees below zero, it took them sixteen days to make the last one hundred miles from Sun River northward to the agency. They arrived at the agency on February 8, 1887, to find that "the Indians had been tampered with by designing white men whom we found at the Agency—men who hoped to gain some advantage to themselves, in one way or another." Prompted by these men, the chiefs demanded $3,000,000 for their surplus lands. This was much more than the commissioners believed they were authorized to offer. Finally, "after long and patient reasoning with them," the Indians agreed to accept $150,000 per year for ten years.[12]

On February 11, an agreement was signed by the commissioners, by chiefs White Calf and Three Suns (Big Nose), and by 220 other adult males of the Piegan tribe. Elderly Indians who, as young men, affixed their marks to this paper, referred to it in their conversations with me as "when we sold the Sweet Grass Hills." Although the eastern boundary between the Piegans and their Gros Ventre neighbors had been indefinite, the Piegans considered the Sweet Grass Hills the most prominent landmark in

[10] Commissioner of Indian Affairs to Secretary of Interior, April 3, 1884, Indian Office Records.

[11] Kappler, *Indian Affairs, Laws and Treaties*, I, 261-62.

[12] Report of Negotiations of the Commissioners, February 11, 1887. Special Case No. 144, Indian Office Records.

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 306]

8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

that portion of the ceded area over which their buffalo hunting parties used to roam. The Blackfeet Reservation established under the terms of this agreement comprised the westernmost portion of their former reservation. Its eastern boundary followed the main channel of Cut Bank Creek, from its mouth upstream for a distance of twenty miles, thence in a line due northward to the Canadian boundary. The new reservation was bounded on the north by the international line, on the west by the summit of the Rockies, and on the south by Birch Creek. It was still a large area in proportion to the number of Indians residing upon it. Its 1,760,000 acres provided an equivalent of 775 acres for each man, woman, and child among the Piegans of Montana. When their agent stated that "this reservation gives them sufficient land for all their wants," his conclusion must have sounded reasonable to both whites and Indians.[13]

In return for the land relinquished by the Indians, the government agreed to spent $150,000 annually for a period of ten years to purchase livestock, agricultural and mechanical implements, goods, clothing, and subsistence, to provide for the education of the Indian children, to furnish medical care, to build a new agency, schools, and shops, to assist the Indians in building homes and enclosing their farms, and "to promote their civilization, comfort and improvement."

As an incentive to Indian industry, the agreement further provided that in the distribution of livestock, goods, clothing, agricultural implements, and the like, "preference shall be given to Indians who endeavor by honest labor to support themselves, and especially to those who in good faith undertake the cultivation of the soil or engage in pastoral pursuits as a means of obtaining a livelihood."[14]

Congress approved the agreement on May 1, 1888. That very spring some of the Piegan bands, encouraged by the government's promise to reward industry, moved northward from Badger Creek. They broke 150 acres of land on Two Medicine River

[13] Reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1888, 150.
[14] *Ibid.*, 1888, 302-19. Contains full text of this agreement.

[i.e., the agreement with the U.S government of 1887--Analyst]

9: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1955 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

on thinly covered side hills rather than on the luxuriant stands of the valleys. They were concerned, however, that there be sufficient grass in the neighborhood of campsites to support their herds. They also recognized that horses preferred some grasses to others.

Present-day agricultural extension agents regard the Blackfoot Reservation in Montana as one of the finest livestock ranges in the United States. However, the old-time Blackfoot preferred the area eastward of the present reservation for fall and winter pasturage. The vicinity of the Sweetgrass Hills, described by Stanley (1855, p. 447) as the favorite fall pasturage for buffalo a century ago, was a section in which the grass remained green until late fall and in which clear lakes were plentiful. In the late decades of buffalo days a favorite wintering locality of the Piegan was the valley of the Marias River from the present Shelby–Great Falls Railway crossing eastward.

Elderly informants named several range plants common along the Marias which their people regarded as excellent fall and winter forage of horses. These are: "jointed water grass" (*Equisetum arvense*), the common horsetail; "weasel grass" (*Artemisia cana*), the silver sagebrush; "blue stick grass" (probably *Chrysothannus nauseosus*), the rabbit brush; "real grass" (buffalograss, *Buchloe dactyloides*); and "jingle grass" (unidentified).[11]

On the Marias River also was found a white clay streaked with yellow that "tasted like nuts." Horses were fond of it. Some people ate it also. In fall and winter the earth around alkali sinks was peeled off, broken up, and fed to animals. Indians believed it had the same beneficial effect as salt on livestock.

Throughout the greater part of the year Blackfoot horses kept in condition on no other feed than the wild range grasses. Captain Marcy (1859, pp. 111–112) observed that "for prairie service, horses which have been raised exclusively upon grass, and never have been fed on grain, or 'range horses,' as they are called in the West, are decidedly the best, and will perform more hard labor than those that have been stabled and groomed." The Blackfoot, in buffalo days, made no efforts to put up wild hay for winter feed. Their efforts to provide grass for their horses were limited largely to the expedient of selecting camping places where the best grasses could be found.

When the grass in the vicinity of a winter camp was consumed, it was necessary to move camp. Only the severest weather conditions which made the movements of horses impossible would prevent this change of location. Some bands, whose members owned large horse

[11] I am indebted to Claude Schaeffer, curator, Museum of the Plains Indian, for the collection of specimens of some of these plants, and to Ellsworth P. Killip, formerly of the Department of Botany, U. S. National Museum, for the identification of these specimens.

11: Goldfrank E-4,5 (1939) 1966 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

homes far removed from the band lands. A member of the Lone-Fighters said, "The bands are all mixed up now," and certainly it is true that a man would know to what band he belonged, but his information regarding others was frequently unreliable. Yet, at the Sun Dance in the summer of 1939, the bands took their places in the camp circle in a recognized order: west to south, Fisheaters, Pacer-Fisheaters, Hairy-Shirts; south to east, Followers-of-the-Buffalo, Many-Children; east to north, Lone-Fighters; north, Many-Tumors; north to east, Black-Elks.

Even in the distant past the organization of the bands had been loose, and there is little evidence that this recent geographical dislocation weakened their cohesiveness to any substantial degree. It is even possible that the fixed dwellings made it more difficult to change from one to another. Band leadership, on the other hand, has been considerably modified both by political and economic change.

In the nomadic past, a leader's power depended upon strong support from family and band. For this he paid in "generous-giving." "No Blackfoot," writes Wissler, "can aspire to be looked upon as a head man unless he is able to entertain well, often invite others to his board, and make a practice of relieving the wants of his less fortunate band members."[154] Today, a band leader may be called upon to make decisions regarding leaseholds; he may influence the distribution of government property (one informant cynically observed that all the thirty wagons assigned to the tribe in 1939 found their way into the hands of the chiefs' relatives); he may be called in to help settle disputes; and barring malfeasance, he can expect to hold office for life. But—and this is the crux of the matter—the Canadian Government distributes the rations; the Canadian Government gives credit on seeds, stock, wagons, and tools. The Canadian Government frequently subsidizes the building of houses and barns. The need to support native leadership is obviously reduced.

Moreover, the early emphasis on individualistic behavior has survived. For this reason, the implementation of a government program does not depend entirely on the assistance of a tribal intermediary, such as the community leader of the Navaho,[155] the pueblo priests or their secular surrogates. Among the Blood, when chiefly authority fails to win cooperation, the Administration can still hope for success by appealing directly to interested members of the tribe.

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[154] *Ibid.*, p. 23. Cf. also Lewis (*op. cit.*, p. 42) who points out that the authority of chiefs in the buffalo period increased when they had a monopoly of the fur trade and weakened when they were faced with intra-tribal competition.

[155] Solon T. Kimball and John H. Provinse, *Navajo Social Organization in Land Use Planning*, pp. 18-25.

15: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1949) 1950 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Gros Ventre NQ13

B G 133 231 823 [137] [824]

But rivers were important natural resources. From them the Indians obtained water for themselves and their dogs and horses. Their tree-bordered banks furnished timber for firewood and for fashioning weapons and household utensils and cottonwood bark for winter horse feed. The river valleys also offered shelter for their winter camps and winter pasture for their horses. The number of rivers and streams in the Missouri-Saskatchewan Region was sufficiently great and their distribution was such that nomadic bands of Indians could travel widely throughout the area with rarely any need for a dry camp.

B G 648

Rivers were extremely important as points of reference to early white observers in locating the Indian tribes of the region. They also were commonly designated as boundary markers in the treaties of the United States with these tribes and in the Executive Orders defining tribal reservations. Especially useful in defining the locations of tribes and negotiating tribal boundaries in the United States was the Missouri River and its larger tributaries - the Milk, Marias (and its western branches Birch Creek and Cut Bank Creek), Teton and Sun rivers on the north, and the Musselshell on the south.

B G 133

Equally important to these Indian tribes were the North and South Saskatchewan and the latters' affluents the Red Deer, Bow, Oldman and Belly rivers.

B G 361 178

After the buffalo were exterminated and their nomadic days were ended these Indians settled down along river valleys and tried to farm until they began to receive cattle following the 1888 Agreements.

[p.32]

175 It was not based upon mere whim or obstinancy on their part. It was
648 based upon their current needs for making a living in their country.
657
131 Meanwhile white settlers were applying pressure to make the
[177] Indians move north of the newly established boundary. The Agency on the Teton was becoming untenable. On February 2, 1875, Agent Wood reported that "partys here have preempted and filed claims covering the farm and stockade of this Agency and it makes matters here very
[823] unpleasant for an Agent." He found that the Indians "have a great love for this portion of the Country as their forefathers lived here and are buried here." He found that Agent May had led the Indians to believe that he would get the land back for them, which complicated his task. Yet he reported, "I have the consent of the greater portion of them to go to the new reservation and am told that there is plenty of wood, water and grass and the most of the buffalo is in that section of the country." (Wood to Comm. Ind. Affairs, Feb. 2, 1875. Indian Office Records. The National Archives.)

On May 14, Wood reported that within the past six weeks Indians visiting the Agency had between 75 and 100 horses stolen from them by whites, so that the Indians didn't want to return to the Agency on the Teton. (Wood to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, May 14, 1875. Indian Office Records, The National Archives). In the same letter Wood explained that he had selected a site for a new Agency on Badger Creek about 10 miles from the mountains.

[p. 146]

137 to the lush river-bottoms. Our information has to do only with those growing along the prairie streams (Fig. 7).

343 824 [778] [178] Sweat lodges (Fig. 8, 9 & 10) were associated with all of the ceremonial bundles, with most of the societies, with all of the medicine pipes, and with the Holy Lodge, or Okan, of the Sun Dance. Traditionally, the water birch (Betula occidentalis) was used in the construction of sweat lodges; however, in recent times, because of a difference of opinion among ceremonalists as to the origin of birch, only willows (Salix spp.) came to be used. A given number of wands were sharpened at both ends. One end was planted in the ground, and the wand was woven through the rest of the wands until the other end reached the ground, where it was forced in. The sweat lodge was a dome-shaped shelter in which two to six men could sit. When it was ready for use it was covered with skin robes or blankets. In some cases the [778] sweat lodges were painted and the ceremonial bundles were placed on top of the lodge. Sweat lodges also were built for bundles that had not been used for a long time.

[823] The door always faced east. (Sometimes there was a west door, through which the participants left after the ceremony.) A small pit, of variable size and shape, was excavated in the center of the floor, and hot stones [782] were placed in it. Due west from the east door was the sweet-grass smudge. The floor was covered with sage (Artemisia ludoviciana), which was used for [792] cleansing. (Sometimes a small offering of meat and sage was buried in the [27] base of the pit before the hot stones were rolled in.) Sage was chewed by [789] assistants to the participants during the sweat-lodge rituals to relieve thirst resulting from taboos against the consumption of liquids.

575 343 824 The Horn Society sweat lodge was constructed of fourteen willows. The Holy Woman's sweat lodge in the Sun Dance was made of one hundred willows,

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 24]

796 824 [178] [237] Society rituals was traditionally made from two incense tongs, but recently two poles crossed at right angles have been used. Eagle feathers and cloth are attached at the top. The sage is tied at both ends of the arms and at the center, where the poles cross (Fig. 12), balls of sage are also used to cleanse the body during participation in the All Smoking Ceremony.

[782] In the Okan (Holy Lodge) of the Sun Dance the Lodge dancers wore sage around their wrists and ankles---as though they were themselves offerings.

[785] [302] Among the Peigan, one man fasted until the Okan center pole was raised; then he entered a sweat lodge and used sage to wipe off the black paint with which he had been covered. In early times sage was used as a bed for the Buffalo Stones (Iniskim) during buffalo drive rituals.

[823] [775] [773] It seems that the proper way to dispose of the sage was to throw it eastward rather than burn it or just put it down. There were other uses of course. A person afraid of a ghost would cleanse himself with sage. A man who was going to enter a horse race might do the same. There does not appear to be an origin myth for this plant.

SASKATOON

Amelanchier alnifolia Nutt

824 796 262 The saskatoon (Fig. 13) is a well known bush of the river bottoms and coulee slopes. Its berries make preserves and tasty snacks. They were included in Blackfoot ritual meals. A berry soup accompanied most ceremonial events, such as the transfer of a tipi design or the opening [462] of a Medicine Pipe bundle or a Beaver bundle. The woman prepared the soup from saskatoon berries, assorted roots, fat, and water. At an appointed [782] time during the ceremony this soup was served to all participants. The soup was blessed, and an offering of one of the berries was put back into the ground, before eating began. A few mouthfuls were taken; then the

(TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 27)

346 The tree was dabranched and carried (by wagon, in later days) to its
824 place of erection. All could help in raising the center pole, and while it
796 was going up everybody sang songs of rejoicing and fired guns into the air. Then certain societies were chosen to gather branches for use in completing
[178] the lodge. In recent times, among the North Blackfoot these duties have
[575] fallen to the Prairie Chicken and Crazy Dog societies. They return on horseback, holding the boughs erect and singing songs of joy.

● [823] The parade traverses the camp sunwise and enters by the west gate (Fig. 17).

CREEPING JUNIPER

Juniperus horizontalis Moench

824 Creeping juniper (Fig. 18), called sik-si-nou-koo ("black round object (berry)") in Blackfoot, is a common plant of the plains. Although it is strongly aromatic, it was not used as incense; however, there were other uses for its branches and berries.

824 The Holy Lodge dancer of the Sun Dance performed upon a carpet of
796 juniper branches. It was forbidden to spit on the covering; instead, one
[784] had to lift the branches and spit under them. An Okan dancer held the wing
[237] of an owl in his left hand and a branch of juniper in the other. One
[292] informant said that, in addition to carrying the branch, some dancers wore headpieces of juniper berries; the headpiece had seven berries representing
[532] the Bunched Stars (Pleiades). (The same stars are portrayed in tipi designs.) Sprigs of creeping juniper were also used symbolically to decorate the altar of the Marten-designed tipi.

[533] Although there does not seem to have been any song directly associated with the creeping juniper, there was an indirect reference in the songs of
[292] the Weasel-tailed suits. These suits, which were fringed with white weasel
[237] tails, were considered to be very powerful and had to be transferred just

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 36]

and seen that our fireplaces in the centers of our tipis were surrounded by circles of stones, and that around the fireplaces our People were seated in circles. As each of these circles had no beginning and no end, so we were reminded that the Great Spirit of the Universe has no beginning and no end.

We were gathered together in the circle encampment to sing and pray and dance in many ceremonies. The ceremonies were to remind us of all the Spirits that gave us the Powers to live during the seasons since our last sacred gathering. Our songs were of the birds and animals, of the People and mountains, of the trees and flowers, of the sky and Sun. Especially of Sun! Sun is our constant reminder of the endless Power of the Universe. Sun is our father. The warm love that he sends to our Mother, Earth, brings life and makes everything grow. It is the same warm love that Sun provided for Earth in the times of our grandfathers and their grandfathers. Our prayers to Sun give us the same Holy Power he gave them in long-ago times. It is that endless Holy Power of the Universe that we refer to as *Natojewa*. It is our godhead and our Great Spirit.

To the Blood People the Belly Buttes are Natojewa; they are our Holy Land. Every year thousands of tourists speed through this land on

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 5A]

their way to Waterton and Banff National Parks or to the famous Calgary Stampede in Canada. Yet there are areas far enough away from the speeding traffic for the Belly Buttes to remain the isolated center of the Holy Spirit among the Blood People.

The Power of the Buttes is felt by all who go near them, even when there is no encampment in progress. One winter a desperate family searched an old Sun Dance campsite for firewood, which is scarce out on the prairie. This family discovered they were using the fallen log of the sacred Center Pole for fuel when they were awakened during a cold night by an unseen Power singing the holy Center Pole songs in a loud voice. Another time, an enterprising rancher from our reserve began to fence in the Buttes so that his cattle could graze there. But he was discouraged from building his fence when strange sensations overtook him; older relatives reminded him that Holy Spirits must not be disturbed without some sacrifice.

□

In 1972 the Sun Dance Encampment was located near the edge of the flat that overlooks the tree- and brush-lined Belly River bottoms. As the flat rises up from the river, the Belly Buttes rise up from the flat, farther to the east. It is in those Buttes that many men have gone to find their visions and Spirit helpers. Bears lived there not long ago. Today, eagles sometimes build their nests there, and mountain lions cross tracks with porcupines and coyotes. In some of the many caves and crevices are now the final resting places of those Old People who passed away after laws were made forbidding the traditional practice of placing bodies near to the Spirit World on top of scaffolds or in branches of trees.

It was still morning when we arrived at the campground with our outfit. Our spiritual grandparents, Mokakin and Ponah, pointed out a vacant spot next to their tipi where they thought we should camp. Mokakin, who was attending his

hides, he showed them how to make a lodge to live in, how to cut the poles, how to set them up, and how to make the beds and other furnishings. He showed the men how to hunt and use pounds, just as the buffalo had done before. 539 773

NAPI GIVES THE PEOPLE DEATH

Some time after this, Napi was standing with a woman by a river. He picked up a buffalo chip and threw it into the water. "As this chip rises to the surface and floats," he told the woman, "so will the People rise and return to life four days after death." The woman picked up a stone and threw it into the water. "As this stone sinks and stays gone," she told Napi, "so should People remain gone once they are dead." Napi agreed. Not long after this one of the woman's children took sick and died. She came to Napi, crying, and said, "Let us have death be as you said, so that my child will come back in four days." "No," said Napi, "you have decided for yourself. As the stone sinks, so will your child stay gone." Since that time the People have always gone and not returned when they died.

NAPI BRINGS MEN AND WOMEN TOGETHER

Some time after Napi saved the People from the buffalo, they separated into two groups—men and women. Napi spent his time with the women, with whom he always enjoyed himself. He showed the women how to build a Piskan, or buffalo pound, at the base of a cliff, so that they could drive herds of buffalo down into it and butcher them for meat and hides. [In the Rocky Mountain foothills, west of Claresholm, Alberta, you can still visit the Women's Buffalo Jump, which is supposed to be the one Napi helped to prepare.] Napi showed the women how to find and eat strawberries, raspberries, and other wild berries. He also showed them how to dry service- [823] [222] [252]

[p. 52-B]

lead him to her tipi. Napi quickly jerked his hand away and shrunk back, shouting, "Go away, you filthy woman, I wouldn't have you for my wife." The chief of the women was angered and returned alone to her lodge. She quickly cleaned herself and put on her fine buckskin outfit. She braided her hair and incensed her body in the smoke of sweetgrass. When Napi saw this well-dressed woman walking toward the gathering he thought, "My, what a fine-looking woman. I would like to have her for my wife." She walked right up to him and he thought that she was going to choose him. However, she walked on by and chose the man standing next to him. As she left with her new husband she reminded the other women that they were not to choose Napi. Thus, Napi was left alone while all the others became husbands and wives. For many centuries a large pine tree stood at the Women's Buffalo Jump. People said that it was the ghost of Napi mourning because he had no wife.

539
773
[824]

NAPI AND THE NIGHT HAWKS

[823]

South of Calgary, there is a place the Old People call Where Napi Slept. The shape of Napi's bed can still be plainly seen. Napi and Kit Fox were taking a trip through this area. They came to the top of a high hill, where Napi told his partner, "Let us slide down this hill to save ourselves the trouble of walking." As they reached the bottom, a huge slide of loose rocks came down after them. But they ran just in time. The Old People call this place Napi's Slide. As the two hiked over the hot prairie, Napi decided that his robe was getting too heavy. They passed by a lone boulder, and Napi laid his robe over it, saying, "Here, my friend the stone, take this robe to keep you warm." When they had not walked very much farther, they noticed dark clouds coming up. Napi feared that a thunderstorm was approaching. He told Kit Fox to go back and ask the stone to lend him his robe. Kit Fox went back, but soon

On his way he came across a nest of young night hawks. "Where are your parents?" he asked them. "They are getting food for us," was the reply. Now he knew that these were the children of the two night hawks that had just saved his life. His ornery mood returned to him and he shouted at the young birds, "Your parents have just annoyed me greatly. They had no business spoiling my fun out on the prairie. No one asked them to break that stone apart." And with that he took the young birds and put his fingers in each one's mouth and stretched them wide. Then he took a stone and pounded their long beaks until they were quite crooked, and he said, "This is how your kind will look from now on." And that is why night hawks have large mouths and crooked beaks.

When the old night hawks returned and discovered what had happened to their children, they immediately flew off after Napi. Napi saw them coming and tried to run from them, but they caught up to him and began throwing stones at his robe. The night hawks told Napi, "You will not be bothered by your robe anymore after we are through with you." Each time they threw a stone, a piece broke off Napi's robe, until the last piece was knocked from his hand. As Napi ran, he turned his head to see if the night hawks were still coming after him. At that moment the birds each threw their last stone, which hit him directly in the mouth, knocking out all his teeth. The night hawks then returned to their nest, satisfied that they had revenged Napi's evil treatment. At Rocky Creek, near Calgary, you can still see the pieces of the big stone, lying in a row as they broke off.

□

Ponah returned to her tipi while we were listening to Mokakin's last story of the night. Between stories, she had mentioned that her "old man" had often told Napi stories at home when she was still a child. She remembered sitting around the wood stove during winter blizzards,

keep the sacred objects bundled up so that their spiritual powers will only be used in the proper sacred way. 778

The main object in every Medicine Pipe Bundle is the sacred Stem. Like exceptionally long regular pipestems, they have a straight hole beginning at the carved mouthpiece and ending at the carved bowl-fitting. Sacred Pipes are very handsomely decorated, with many black-and-white ermine tails, black-and-white eagle feathers, eagle plumes, other feathers, and beads, bells, and porcupine quills. They are kept in long, tubular cases of red, blue, or black wool stroud cloth, the kind with the white selvedges brought to our People by traders of the long-ago. These cloth covers replaced the original buckskin covers as they wore out. 779 276 [531] [237] [415]

Spiritually, the sacred Stems represent all the Holy Powers of the Universe. They were first given by Thunder, who embodies the rain-water that helps to make everything grow. The wood stems represent all the plants that grow upon Earth; the eagle tailfeathers represent all the Above Powers, including all the birds, the eagle being the most Powerful among them; the ermine skins stand for all the Below Powers, including the animals that walk on Earth; and the beads and bells symbolize all the goodness and beauty of the Universe. The sacred Stems are attached to stone bowls that represent the strength of our Earth Mother. Her Spirit travels in the form of smoke along the long and straight path of the sacred Stem, into the body of the smoker, and as he exhales it, up into the air that flows throughout the Universe. The physical appearance of a sacred Pipe represents all the holy beauty that can be found if one lives by its holy Ways. 778 776 276 824 825 [823]

No one knows exactly how many sacred Pipes were made among our People throughout the ages, but there were probably no more than a few dozen. Shortly after 1900, Clark Wissler made an extensive study and concluded that there were "something more than seventeen" Medicine 779 276

source of food. A whistle makes the sounds for the winds and all the birds that fly in the air. Pouches of sacred Earth paints represent our Earth Mother. Sweet pine needles, used for incense, speak for all that is sweet and holy. The tanned elk hide wrapped around the Bundle testifies to the majesty of that animal. The tanned skin of a black bear, wrapped around the elk hide, represents the physical power of bears and gives the Bundle strength and protection. A plaid shawl draped over all of these things gives the Bundle privacy and symbolizes the Power of the changes that have come to our Old Ways.

778 825 237 [824] [534] [823]

Sacred Pipes are smoked only during Medicine Lodge ceremonies, and not at any other time —not even during Medicine Pipe Bundle-Opening ceremonies. When taken out of their Bundles, they are not smoked but danced with. Dancing is so important that many refer to our Medicine Pipe ceremonies by the Blackfoot term *Ninamska-Paskan*—Medicine Pipe Dance.

778 276 796 [535]

In the Old Days, when the People lived together in lodges, the Medicine Pipe Bundle was opened on the first day Thunder was heard in the spring. When this happened and it was confirmed in the home of a Bundle Owner that the opening ceremony would be held, the wife immediately began preparing the berry soup. Owner and wife would then change into their best dress and straighten out their lodge, which soon filled with relatives, friends, and all nearby Medicine Pipe People. If the Owner was not properly educated to open his own Bundle, he asked a former Owner to lead the ceremony.

Each Bundle had its own group of followers. Those who formerly owned the Bundle always attended all its ceremonies. Close relatives of the present Owner came, and the ones who helped with the transfer payments were given spiritual rights to parts of the Bundle. Others came because they were interested in the special Powers of the Bundle.

778 [425]

In the Old Days, members of a band trans-

778 432

[p. 125-B]

[Medicine Pipe Transfer Ceremony, 1890's]

sidered to be a bad sign. A piece falling from a sacred object, an error made in the singing, a rattle or drumstick dropped, or a person falling down, particularly if caused by the negligence of the participant, will cause the marked person to immediately ask some old man to call out four brave deeds, in the hope that the old man's powers in times of danger will help prevent possible misfortune as a result of the accident.] 796 432 778 787 [789] [555]

Sometimes a woman is allowed to take the pipe at these dances and clumsily dances [this is a gross interpretation of the smooth dancing done by women; an ideal woman remains very dignified during social occasions and does not dance with the glamour and obvious enthusiasm shown by the men], facing a minute to each of the five points of the compass [actually, four]. There are generally some extra moves in the ceremony of unrolling the Calumet peculiar to each pipe; for instance in one case, before dancing, a squaw takes a drum stick and strikes two blows on each of the lodge poles that the entrance is between [the spiritual purpose of this to notify the sacred lodge that loud noise, in the form of drumming, is about to commence], in another case a forked stick is used to rest the head of the stuffed owl upon, this stick stuck upright between the other red willows. 796 432 778 535 [562] [923]

The following narrative is also from Wilson's notebook of the 1890s. He calls this story a "Calumet Transfer." 796 432 778

When an Indian has once said that he will take the Sacred Pipe, he must not fail to keep his promise, for he is sure to be visited with misfortune should he so trifle with the Sacred. Nowadays a man names the day that he will pay the horses and be initiated. Formerly, it was customary to leave that to the owner and priests who would take him by surprise the night before the transfer was due to take place. The pipe is unrolled with the same ceremony as in Thunder [127] [626]

21: Hungry Wolf F-4,5 (ca. 1972) 1977
NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

Iniskims: The Sacred Buffalo-Stones

In the Old Days, there was a sacred article sure to be found in every household, which everyone learned the songs and simple ceremony for in early childhood. This sacred object was called the *Iniskim*, the sacred buffalo-stone. 778 [184]

Iniskims are stones whose odd shapes help to inspire thoughts about the Powers of the Universe. A man preparing to go on a hunt or a woman in need of spiritual support would take the Iniskim and, holding it between the palms, pray to Earth and other Spirits of nature the sacred rock represents. Some of us still pray with Iniskims. 778 782

Any stone kept in a sacred way can be an Iniskim. Odd-shaped stones and fossils are the most common. The odd-shaped stones usually resemble persons or buffalo; the fossilized shells inspire thoughts about the Holy Power of the Universe. The latter took on special significance when our People learned that the vast prairies were once under water. 778 [823]

The Iniskims in Beaver Bundles, Medicine Pipe Bundles, and sacred Tipi Bundles were collected by our People in the very long ago. Some of these old Iniskims were passed along with their Bundles or separately, and are still among us today. The Iniskims kept on the family altar or worn on a necklace are not so old. Most have been found recently by members of the family. [301]

[p. 169-A]

[Nighttime Ceremony, Ca. 1972]

to remind us of the Powers of Earth and all that grows upon it. When the ball was ready, he turned toward me and dropped it into my cupped hands. I rolled the ball between my palms and then brushed it, slowly, twice down each side of my body, while praying to ask that the cleansing Spirits of the sage purify my body and replace any evil in it with the natural goodness of the Earth. When I finished, I passed the sage sacrament to the person at my left, and so it went around the room. More incense was made, and then the young helper was instructed to go out and bring in the offering. He covered himself with his blanket for this sacred duty, and went out to bring in the holy object from its quiet, sacred resting place.

The object represents the Spirits who are with us, in our life here on Earth. Fastened to it are symbols that recall to everyone the Powers of the Universe. For instance, the frame of the offering is made of two willow sticks tied together in the shape of a cross; the willows represent trees and bushes, as well as the material from which we build our sweat lodges; and the cross the sticks are tied in stands for the junction of the four sacred directions, which is the place where we stand, each of us, no matter where on this Earth we are. Fastened on top of the cross, the willow stick tied to form a circle speaks for the roundness of our Sun, our Moon, and our Universe, the sacred circle in whose honor we arrange our lodges and our camps. Fastened to the circle are seven black-and-white eagle feathers. Seven is our sacred number, as there are seven moons in each season, and seven stars help us tell time at night and remind us of all the other stars in the nighttime sky; the feathers are black-and-white to remind us of day and night, good and bad, life and death. Bunches of sage are tied to the ends of the arms on the cross because sage is pure and holy in the prairie-life of our Old Ways, and represents the sacredness of all the plants on Earth. Black and red pieces of cloth are tied to the arms of the offering with buckskin thongs; the thongs remind

23: Wissler E-4,5 (1902-ca.1911) 1918
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

and first takes the painted tongue and then all the others and hangs them up as before. This ends the ceremony. [796] [533]

Two days later, the same participants are called together to the same tipi and the woman rises and takes first the painted tongue and then the others from where they were hung. A parfleche is brought and a buffalo song sung: "Buffalo I take. Where I sit is powerful." The painted tongue and then the others are placed on the parfleche. Wild peppermint is put in with the tongues, the parfleches are tied up and placed at the rear of the tipi. Sometimes tongues are dried in front of the tipi on a stage made by setting up two travois with a lodge pole tied between them. [533] [263] [251]

The man and woman who lead the ceremony must not have any metal about them. Brass rings, earrings, and all such trinkets must be taken off. Nor must there be any knives in the vicinity. Even the knives with which the tongues are cut are taken out. No one must spit in front of him, but always close to the wall under the beds. If they do, it will rain. No water is brought into the medicine lodge and when water is brought, it is covered. The only time when it is permitted to eat or drink is before sunrise and after sunset. They must be given food by the instructors. The prayers in this ceremony are prayers for good luck for everyone in the camp. [823] [301] [784] [821] [782]

This closes the preliminaries to the ceremonies leading to the sun dance and may be designated as the cutting of the tongues. As in most other cases, there seems to have been considerable variation in this procedure, both as to time and order. Certainly, for a number of years, it has been much abbreviated. As implied in the program, this ceremony may be performed on the first day. The gathering of tongues was dependent upon circumstances and after the days of the great buffalo drives was a matter of gradual accumulation. Thus, it was explained, that by necessity, the "cutting" was often repeated, though naturally with less ceremony. 796 178

The parfleches containing tongues are kept in the medicine woman's tipi where they are "prayed and sung over" during the first and second days of the program. The underlying thought seems to be that they are consecrated to the sun. 796 778

In the procession of the fourth day, the parfleches are carried behind the medicine woman by her attendants. In former years, these were the women who had promised "to go forward to the tongues." They are present at the ceremony in the medicine woman's tipi and may be said to be in attendance during the entire fasting period. At the time indicated in the program, the parfleches are opened and the women in turn step out with some of the dried tongue, face the west, and each holding up a piece, address the sun then nearing the horizon. They declare their innocence of adultery, as at the time of making the vow and cutting the tongues. They also 796 782

23: Wissler E-4,5 (1902-ca.1911) 1918
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

The Hundred-Willow Sweathouse.

796 343 As stated before, a sweathouse of special form is constructed on the third day. This is said to have originated with Scar-face, it being the house into which he was taken by the sun. About the middle of the day a society [575] is sent out for the willows. These were usually those of the younger men; the pigeons and mosquitoes. There is a belief, however, that in former times only warriors could be sent upon this errand. These persons are [823] mounted and return in procession, singing and circling the medicine woman's [784] tipi in the direction of the sun, and deposit their willows at the west side of the camp circle. They must not drink water while on this duty.

[575] 784 [555] An older society is called to build the sweathouse. They must not drink water while engaged in this operation and receive some of the tongues after the ceremonies of the fourth day. Formerly, these men must have had a coup to their credit as a qualification and some informants claim that the sum total for the society should have totalled at least one hundred, the number of willows. The work begins some time before sunset by which time the sweathouse should be completed.

[824] The willows are stuck into the ground in an oval and their tops bent over and interlocked over the top. The ends point toward the east and the west, an opening or door being provided at each. The willows are then painted, one side red and the other black. Next, a hole is dug in the center of the structure for the heated stones. In the meantime, a small heap of stones mixed with firewood has been placed some distance to the east. [237] A buffalo skull is painted with red spots on one side and black on the other. Sagegrass is thrust into the nose and eye-sockets. Robes are then thrown over the willows and all is ready for the procession from the medicine woman's tipi.

796 343 793 [823] [778] The procession from the medicine woman's tipi consists of the father and another man experienced in ceremonial affairs, the husband, the mother and the medicine woman. They approach slowly and by stages, passing around the south side of the sweathouse to the north and then to the east or entrance. All keep their eyes on the ground. The husband walks with a heavy staff; the medicine woman carries the natoas bundle with a smudge stick.

The men enter the sweathouse, while the two women go to the west side and sit down facing the east. The medicine woman is on the north side with 796 the bundle before her. After the men have entered, the fire is lighted and 343 some of the attendants (builders of the sweathouse) lift the buffalo skull to the top of the sweathouse where it faces the east. Prayers and the usual

25: Ewers E,G-5 (1941-1951) 1963 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

539 276 778 Both of the men who received the first buffalo-painted lodges were given straight pipes by the water spirit. Once when the Indians came to the river from which these painted lodges were obtained the water was so high that they could find no place to cross. Then Weasel Heart, who had been given one of the buffalo lodges, took his straight pipe, filled it with tobacco, prayed to the water spirit, lit the pipe, and walked into the water. As he walked he puffed upon his pipe, sang, and prayed. He walked all the way across the stream in water only knee deep. To the people on shore, the water appeared to be holding him up. Weasel Heart had placed a stick upright in the bank to mark the spot where he had entered the water. When he reached the far shore he planted another stick to show the place he stepped ashore. Then he turned and called to the people, telling them to follow his path between the two sticks. They all crossed the stream, never getting in water above their knees.

● [823] Ever since that time there has been a rock shelf across that river at that point, by which the river can be forded easily.[1]

Short Face went on to say:

Weasel Heart told the people they were forbidden to light the straight pipe with a fire stick. He showed them how to light it by dipping the bowl into the fire and catching a live coal in the end of it. But later on an Indian disobeyed Weasel Heart's instruction and used a burning stick to light a straight pipe. When Weasel Heart learned of that man's action, he told the people that the water spirit was displeased with them for abusing his gift to them. Therefore, the straight pipe would disappear among them.

[178] Short Face added, "Now, as you know, these straight pipes have completely disappeared among the Blackfeet."

276 778 [115] [695] [625] Green-Grass-Bull regarded the straight pipe as a very holy object, used in beaver bundle rituals but not in those of the medicine pipe bundle. He also said that it was the straight pipe upon which the Blackfoot Indians used to take their oaths when they "swore by the pipe" that their testimony was true or their lives would be forfeited. Within the memories of my elderly informants, the straight pipe survived only in the form of ceremonial pipe bowls preserved in medicine bundles. It was smoked only at such times as those bundles were opened and ritually manipulated. Weasel Tail recalled having seen one of these ceremonial pipes which was of red stone, about 3 inches long, and tapered from the bowl end toward the stem end. A lump of mud or charcoal was placed in the tube to keep the tobacco from filtering through into the stem. Green-Grass-Bull said that he had repaired a straight pipe from a medicine bundle owned by Chief White Calf (the last of the Piegan head chiefs, who died in 1903). He recalled that this bowl was shaped like a man's phallus with a rather bulbous end.

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[1] Wissler (1912, p. 232) cited a shorter version of this myth which identified the river as High River and the location of the ford as near the present Northern Blackfoot Reserve in Alberta, Canada.

33: Bradley G-3 (1871-1877) 1923
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

frequently went into action entirely naked. The dress of the Blackfeet was very decent at all seasons, the body being entirely covered, the women being as sensitive to any exposure of the person as their white sisters. Little children, however, were sometimes allowed to run naked, though the girls were usually clothed as soon as they began to walk. When cotton and woolen stuffs were introduced by the traders the men took to their use quite readily, but the women were more conservative and it was long before they learned to substitute cotton or woolen for their former skin gown.

Dye Colors

The colors used in dyeing the porcupine quills, horsehair and feathers employed as trimming were red, yellow and black. The red was obtained from the bull berry, the yellow from the root of a plant, and the black apparently from pulverized lignite, of which they had an abundance in their country. These colors were prepared for use as a paint by mixing with glue obtained from the hoofs of the buffalo. With this compound they often lavishly ornamented buffalo robes, saddles, bags, lodges and shields with nude figures of people and animals. Other colors were introduced by the traders and readily adopted.

Head Covering

Neither men nor women ordinarily wore any covering on the head. For special occasions, however, the men were provided with war bonnets of elaborate workmanship. This consisted of a cap of buffalo hide, usually supporting a pair of horns jutting out from the sides in imitation of the buffalo, ornamented with feathers, porcupine quills, strips of ermine, horse hair, and frequently a long streamer hanging down behind reaching often nearly to the feet. The feathers were arranged in a row around the head, and, meeting behind, followed the streamer down the back, standing out like the teeth of a saw. The only feathers used were those of the American eagle, which were scarce and valuable; they were not dyed, but were often tipped with red horse hair streamers. The best war bonnets were very gaudy, often handsome, and were esteemed in value equal to a horse.

those underneath. If she found them a rich, yellow-brown in color she knew they were thoroughly smoked. Care was taken that the skins did not smoke too long and become too dark in color. Usually it required a half day or longer to smoke skins by this method. 281

Although many Blackfeet preferred white skins for their dress clothing, the smoked ones generally were used for their undecorated, everyday garments, since these skins were more serviceable. 294

Keeping Skins Clean

Clothes were kept clean by rubbing them from time to time with native clay. White clay was used on the white skins, a yellow clay on the smoked ones. The clay was moistened with water and rubbed over the surface of the skin garments. Then the whole garment was rubbed briskly with a bone or rock and hung up to dry. Dirt, grease, grass, and other stains that discolored the skins were thus removed and the original white or yellow-brown color restored. The method was much the same as that employed by modern people in cleaning white shoes. In place of white clay, a native stone, known as selenite, was sometimes used for cleaning white skins. Pieces of it were burned in the fire until they turned white, then ground to a powder before use. Little pieces of selenite were placed with clothes of skin to repel moths when the garments were folded and packed in rawhide or soft skin cases or bags for storage or transportation. Sometimes braids of sweetgrass were placed with the clothes to give them a pleasant odor when they were unpacked. 296 [823] [237] 296 823 [824]

Sewing Skins

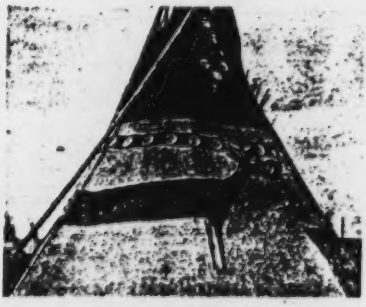
The Blackfeet used animal sinew for thread in sewing skin. Broad bands of sinew were cut from the legs and neck of the buffalo or animals of the deer family. When thread was needed shreds were pulled off with the teeth, softened in water or in the mouth, smoothed with the fingers, and twisted by holding one end in the mouth and rolling the sinew between the palms of the hands. Sinew made a tough, strong, durable 294 283

[P-13-A]

mony of transferring the sacred symbols from the old to the new lodge cover was then ended. 532

The old, worn, painted cover was disposed of either by taking it to a lake, spreading it out, and weighting it with stones so that it would sink; or by spreading it out on the plains and weighting it with stones. In the first instance the old cover was given as an offering to the water spirits; in the second, it was an offering to the sun. [182] [176]

The great animal figures were generally painted on the central portion of the lodge cover, about midway of the height of the lodge. In cases of the larger mammals such as the deer, elk, and buffalo and in that of the snake lodge, a single pair of animals are painted on the cover. They represent the mythical originator and his wife. In most instances they face the lodge doorway (east), the female on the north side of the lodge and the male on the south. However, on the buffalo lodges the two huge figures appear on the east and west sides. The male buffalo is on the east facing south; the female on the west side facing north. Some of the figures have narrow elongated bodies enabling them to extend nearly halfway around the circumference of the lodge. Each of the two figures on the deer painted lodge, for example, is more than fifteen feet long and less than five feet high. Where smaller mammals are represented, 531 532 [823]



22. Deer painted lodge in 1943.

[P.26-B]

42: Kehoe A,G-4,5 (1953, 1956) 1960
NF6 Blackfoot NF6

of charcoal and charred wood was found. Since the wind appeared to blow from the southwest, it was surmised that here was represented the last remnants of the fire, blown from the hearth but caught under the edge of this rock. 172

Summary of fieldwork.—As in the case of the historical accounts and the ethnographic material, the archeological information collected on the Backfeet Indian Reservation supports the conclusion that the tipi rings were used to hold down lodge covers. 121 342 172

Sheer numbers of tipi rings alone give testimony that they served a domestic function, rather than having been of occasional ceremonial use. Their location on flat or nearly flat areas in good camping spots, where they appear to have had taken into account, in their placement, factors of drainage, wind, and other climatic influences, support their use as habitation sites. The topographic settings concur with the camping patterns (of which regular plans of a limited number of types were observed) in suggesting seasonal variations in camps, reflecting an annual cycle of activities such as is known from historic tribes.

The size of the tipi rings on the Reservation vary to a limited extent, but the range and the average both coincide with the sizes of lodges used as conical dwellings among the historic tribes. The variations can be explained by both individual owners and by temporal differences. The number of rings in a site approximate the number of lodges in historic camps, changing from season to season in a regular cycle.

No eccentric tipi rings were found, nor any partial or overlapping rings. All the tipi rings observed on the Reservation were suitable in construction and shape for use as lodge-cover weights. The rocks making up the rings were uniform within a restricted range of size, shape, type of material, total numbers, and arrangements, and the aggregate of these features reinforces the surmise that they were weights for the skin lodges. The absence of rocks, in a few of the tipi rings, in a small area toward the east is reminiscent of the historic tribes' tradition of placing a doorway toward the rising sun. [821] [823]

The occurrence of rock concentrations and rock-lined fire hearths in several tipi rings is further evidence of their use as habitations, while the absence of these hearths in numerous rings agrees with native informants' memories of cooking being done outside the lodge.

A comparison between the sizes of tipi rings and the depths to which their rocks are embedded, as well as the total numbers of rings and of sites at different depths, suggests a temporal change in tipi ring size. The change could well be due to the shift in cultural and economic patterns outlined by Lewis (1942, pp. 35–36).

54: Lancaster F-3(1958-1966)1966 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Piegan
Montana

142
302
301

Two Guns White Calf in Later Life

on the Milk River [the Teton], and I was born there on May 10, 622
1857. I know the exact spot where I was born because it was the cus-
tom of our people to wait until a child was old enough to remember [823]
clearly—when the child had attained the age of perhaps five or six [828]
years—and then to take the child back to the place of his birth and to
rub his head in the dirt so that the memory of his birthplace would
stay with him always. Most Indians of my generation did not know 622
the exact date of their birth, but I know my birthday because when I 797
was born there was a Jesuit priest visiting our camp and the priest
recorded my birth in his book. When I was quite a bit older, this
same priest visited my family once again, and it was at this time
that he christened me James. I do not know the priest's name in
English; we Piegans knew him by his Indian name, Marten Cap"
(in all probability, Father Imoda).

I knew that the Chief's father had been Onistáipokah, who later 622
became Head Chief of the Piegans, and that his mother had been
Black Snake Woman, but I had very little actual knowledge of the
Chief's siblings and I asked him if he would tell me something about
his brothers and sisters.

"I had five brothers and five sisters. All of us boys were named 622
Gun: my eldest brother, who was known as Wolf Tail, was named 551
Strange Gun; I was second eldest, and my name was Last Gun,
which was the name of my father, although later on my uncle, Run-